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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER PK IN

SUBJECT: INDIA-PAKISTAN JOINT ANTI-TERROR MECHANISM: SLOW PROGRESS ON KABUL BOMBING INVESTIGATION

Classified By: Acting POLCOUNS Lesslie Viguerie for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶11. (C) Indian External Affairs Ministry Additional Secretary Vivek Katju and his Pakistani counterpart, Aizaz Ahmad Choudry, held a Special Session of the Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism (JATM) on October 24 in New Delhi. This meeting, which was scheduled when Indian Prime Minister Singh and Pakistani President Zardari met in New York on September 24, is the fourth meeting of the JATM.

¶12. (C) The Special Session focused on the evidence surrounding the bombing of the Indian Embassy in Kabul on July 7, and on the Red Corner Notices (RCN) which India provided Islamabad in March 2007. These list the names of suspected terrorists operating in India and finding refuge in Pakistan. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Deputy Secretary for Pakistan Affairs G. Balasubramanian told PolOff that even though MEA was expecting much more from the Pakistanis during the talks, New Delhi is still hopeful it will receive additional actionable information from Islamabad. Katju had reportedly -- according to the Times of India quoting &sources8 -- shared evidence the GOI had obtained, including wireless intercepts by U.S. military agencies, about ISI's role in the Kabul blast. However, the JATM had made less progress than MEA had anticipated, Balasubramanian stated, and India is still waiting on the results of the independent investigation the Pakistanis launched after the Kabul bombing. More frustrating to MEA is what they view as a lack of progress on the RCN. According to Balasubramanian, Katju told his counterpart that there needs to be more action on the ground and that visible progress was needed.

¶13. (C) In addition to the Kabul bombing, which India also formally addressed with Pakistan during National Security Advisor Durrani's visit earlier in the month, the two sides reportedly agreed to work to identify further counter-terrorism mechanisms and assist in investigations into terror related cases. A Ministry of External Affairs statement emphasized the &positive, constructive and forward looking atmosphere8 of the meeting. Katju and Choudry agreed to meet more frequently and regularly. The previous JATM regular session was held in June 2008, but only four meetings -- including the Special Session -- have taken place since March 2007. The two sides had originally agreed to meet quarterly.

¶4. (C) Comment. The emphasis on the Kabul bombing at this meeting indicates the GOI was not satisfied with Durrani's assurances that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) was not involved. As terrorism continues to mount in India -- the JATM came amidst an uptick in attacks that has baffled the central government since July -- pressure is increasing on the Congress Party to demonstrate results in the fight against terror. Certainly India talking with Pakistan about issues of concern is preferable to not talking, but given the high profile put on this meeting of the JATM following its setup by PM Singh and President Zardari, India has to be disappointed to still have nothing to show for its dialogue with Islamabad on the Kabul bombing.

With elections just around the corner in India, and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) already making terrorism an election issue, the Congress Party -- and the Indian people -- can ill afford counter-terrorism mechanisms which achieve little more than a positive atmosphere.

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